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Great Impulses and New Paths: *VVV*, Surrealism, and the Black Atlantic

Terri Geis

1 Exiled in New York during the Second World War from 1941-1946, a demoralized André Breton faced limited resources—both financially and emotionally—for rallying the surrealist group. He complained to Benjamin Péret that the years in the United States appeared to be shaping up as "a resounding failure," for the movement, a time of division and scattering with "the wind of dispersal" (Polizzotti 522). Back in France years later, Breton would state that he considered his work on the journal *VVV* as an important aspect of an otherwise dark time (Polizzotti 534). Initiated by Breton with the help of fellow exile Max Ernst, the first issue of *VVV* was published in New York in June of 1942.

2 The inspiration for the title of *VVV* indicates a greater optimism within the surrealist movement during these years. The starting reference point was Winston Churchill's famous "V for Victory," slogan, but it likely had multiple significances. For example, Julia Pine notes that, "V.v.v., of course, is also the acronym for Julius Caesar's famous maxim, "Veni, vidi, vici": "I came, I saw, I conquered," and perhaps intimates Breton's own aspirations to "conquer" America for Surrealism" (Pine 15). While the journal represented an effort to create a mouthpiece not only for the exiled European surrealists but also new surrealist affiliates from the Americas, an editorial statement on the back cover of the first issue made clear a certain hierarchy:

> The exigencies of war have brought to America some of the most creative minds most qualified to [...] protect, to develop, to insist on the values of the free and imaginative self; and they, in collaboration with those Americans who are in sympathy with their means and ends, propose to found the review. (*VVV* n.p.)

3 Breton clearly viewed surrealism as a means of enlightening artists in the United States, yet exile status instead inevitably led to a shift in the movement's focus and scope.

4 As Susan Rubin Suleiman has suggested, exile can serve as "a focal point for theoretical reflections about individual and cultural identity, which in turn are intimately bound

up with problems of nationalism, racism and war" (Suleiman 2). The surrealist exile in the Americas led to significant encounters with a wider network of intellectuals, artists and writers. These interactions expanded surrealism, providing the movement with new perspectives on cultural and national identity, and the pervasive concerns at the heart of these issues, namely colonialism and racism. Within this context, the journal *VVV* serves as an important marker of Breton and his colleagues' struggle to find their way in the cultural and political landscape of the Americas of the 1940s, including early manifestations of the African-American civil rights movement and the ongoing anti-colonial and anti-fascist critiques by artists from the Caribbean.

VVV and the Widening Surrealist Scope

5 As a foreign national with tenuous residency status in the United States, Breton could not serve as *VVV*'s editor, and he struggled to find an American for the role. Charles Henri Ford and Lionel Abel both declined the editorial position. The artist Robert Motherwell was also considered, but according to Martica Sawin, "Breton found him too obtuse over the translation of the term 'social consciousness'" (Sawin 214). Breton eventually gave the job to David Hare, a sculptor and photographer from an affluent, socially prominent family.

6 Three issues of *VVV* were published between 1942 and 1944 (including a double issue) and some of Breton's surrealist constituents regularly criticized the journal as failing to assert the movement's position with any coherence, instead being too broadly eclectic. For example, Roberto Matta, who was also instrumental in the journal's initial publication, found it too inclusive, while Wolfgang Paalen described it as "fine bits of odds and ends" (Sawin 239; Breit 443). Contemporary analysis of surrealism in exile has often come to similar conclusions. Sawin's 1995 study describes *VVV* as "lacking direction," while Dickran Tashjian's book from the same year asserts that the journal is primarily of interest "as a sign of the persistence of resilience of Surrealism under the most trying circumstances" (Sawin 347; Tashjian 214). Stamatina Dimakopoulou has aptly noted the journal's "uneasy alliance between Trotksyism, opposition to U.S. involvement in the Second World War, and the surrealist turn to esoteric thought" (Dimakopoulou 743).

7 However, the eclecticism of *VVV* has also been described as representing a "growing diversification" of the movement (Sawin 346). The journal regularly featured artists and writers from Latin America. For example, Matta made regular contributions, including an image of a *vagina dentata* that he created for the cover of the fourth (and final) issue. Such imagery of the treacherous, violent female was common within the surrealist visual lexicon, but it took on a new dimension of cultural specificity when utilized by a Chilean artist. Matta was likely familiar with an old Mapuche (indigenous group of Chile) saying: "A woman of striking appearance has a biting vagina" (Schipper 63).

8 Yet within *VVV,* representations of women did not remain static, either. As Penelope Rosemont has noted, more women artists and writers contributed to *VVV* than to any other surrealist journal, in fact, more than in all other surrealist journals put together (Rosemont 120). The most significant inclusion was undoubtedly in the final issue, which devoted extensive space to *Down Below,* Leonora Carrington's compelling account of her experience in a sanitarium in Spain. As Alice Gambrell has pointed out:

> In a journal whose red cover displays Matta's startling visual interpretation of a *vagina dentata*, one might infer that the editors have finally decided to allow the women to talk back, even to the extent of giving them the last word. (Gambrell 87-88)

9 It can be asserted that *VVV* was the space within which surrealism's longstanding theoretical, political, and symbolic interests, including cultures outside of Europe, colonialism, and the dual trope of madness and female sexuality, intersected with voices that more directly represented these groups. Subsequently, *VVV* has been heavily referenced within recent scholarship on surrealism, women artists and/or Latin America that seeks to highlight the movement's wider networks and lesser-known participants.[1] The work of Black writers and artists from the Caribbean, specifically Aimé Césaire and Wifredo Lam, were also included in the final issue of the journal, as will be examined in the latter half of this essay.

Surrealism and Early Civil Rights Campaigns in the United States

10 A further inspiration for the title of *VVV* indicates the need to examine another aspect of surrealism's diverse focus in the U.S., namely the movement's possible desire to engage with the political efforts of African-Americans. Franklin Rosemont has suggested that the title directly referenced the Double-V campaign, which was launched in Pittsburgh in January of 1942 by James G. Thompson in a letter to an African-American newspaper, *The Pittsburgh Courier*. The campaign, which soon spread across the country, condemned the double standards that saw African-Americans fighting abroad while still subject to segregationist Jim Crow laws throughout the United States. Thompson urged African-Americans to fight Axis forces abroad and discrimination at home:

> The V for victory sign is being displayed prominently in all so–called democratic countries which are fighting for victory over aggression, slavery, and tyranny. If this V sign means that to those now engaged in this great conflict, then let we colored Americans adopt the double V V for a double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies from within. For surely those who perpetrate these ugly prejudices here are seeking to destroy our democratic form of government just as surely as the Axis forces. (Rosemont 202)

11 *The Pittsburgh Courier* created a logo for the movement, consisting of stacked V's and a blue sphere upon which an eagle of liberty perches with spread wings.

12 While no documentation has emerged to indicate that the exiled surrealists were in direct contact with Thompson or the editors at *The Pittsburgh Courier*, they were likely aware of the Double-V campaign's goals. The first page of the first issue of *VVV* explained the meaning of each "V" within the title. The significance of the first "V" was in close alignment with the aims of Double-V movement, victory over fascism and over racial oppression:

> Victory over the forces of regression and of death unloosed at present on the earth, but also V beyond this first Victory, for this world can no more, and ought no more, be the same, V over that which tends to perpetuate the enslavement of man by man. (*VVV* n.p.)

13 Marcel Duchamp's design for the cover of the second *VVV* (a double issue published in 1943) offers a visual counterpart to the journal's statement and stands in interesting connection to the Double-V logo. The cover features an allegorical etching by an unknown artist that depicts death (not liberty) riding over the globe on a horse ("death unloosed at present on the earth") with three superimposed green V's.

14 However grim the tone of Duchamp's image, the mission of *VVV* was clearly in part to stand in solidarity with the international and multifaceted anti-racist struggles for human rights, such as African-American activists' civil rights agenda. In the U.S., prominent artists and writers long-associated with the Harlem Renaissance and New Negro Movement were highly vocal on these wartime issues raised by the Double-V campaign. For example, Langston Hughes, initially opposed to Black involvement in the war, addressed these concerns through poems including "Jim Crow's Last Stand" (1943) and "Will V-Day Be Me-Day, Too?" (1944).

15 It is thus surprising to note that *VVV* included no contributions from intellectuals and artists of color in the United States. Furthermore, the pages of the journal did not include a direct statement on racial oppression like that of "Murderous Humanitarianism," which the surrealists published in Nancy Cunard's *Negro* anthology in 1934. Within this piece, the surrealists vehemently asserted the outrage against colonialism that had marked their activities since the 1920s:

> In the Antilles, as in America, the fun began with the total extermination of the natives, in spite of their having extended a most cordial reception to the Christopher Columbian invaders. Were they now, in the hour of triumph, and having come so far, to set out empty-handed for home? Never! So they sailed on to Africa and stole men. These were in due course promoted by our humanists to the ranks of slavery, but were more or less exempted from the sadism of their masters by virtue of the fact that they represented a capital which had to be safeguarded like any other capital. Their descendants, long since reduced to destitution [...] constitute a black proletariat whose conditions of life are even more wretched than those of its European equivalent [...] (The Surrealist Group in Paris 352).[2]

16 "Murderous Humanitarianism" was attributed to "The Surrealist Group in Paris," and signed by, among others, Breton and two Afro-Caribbean writers from Martinique, Jules Monnerot and Pierre Yoyotte (*Negro* also included pieces by Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and W.E.B. Du Bois, among many others).[3]

17 In contrast, interactions in New York in the 1940s between Black Americans and the surrealist refugees are poorly documented, as Franklin Rosemont has noted (Rosemont 199). This lack of evident connection is especially surprising given the important mutual interest and inspiration in Afro-Caribbean cultural and political developments. In 1945, Breton reflected on the central importance of the African diaspora to the surrealist movement, expressing the key role of Afro-Caribbean artists:

> "Colored" men have always enjoyed exceptional favor and prestige in surrealism [...] It is therefore no accident but a sign of the times, that the greatest impulses towards new paths for surrealism have been furnished during the war just ended, by my greatest "colored" friends — Aimé Césaire in poetry, Wifredo Lam in painting. (qtd. in Rosemont and Keeley 203)

18 Breton made these comments upon his arrival in Haiti at the end of 1945, and the country — the first independent Black republic in the world —clearly figured large in his revolutionary ideals. Just prior to arriving in the United States in June of 1941, Breton had recorded an "unusually ambitious" dream that he was the Mexican

revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, "making ready with my army to receive [Haitian freedom fighter] Toussaint Louverture the following day and to render him the honors to which he was entitled" (Polizzotti 498).

19 In the meantime, as Krista A. Thompson has noted of African-American artists in the first half of the twentieth century, "allusions to the Haitian Revolution in art came to signify the revolutionary potential of all African diasporic populations" (Thompson 79). African-American writers including Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes wrote well-known texts about their experiences in Haiti (while maintaining very different political stances). And to close this potential circle of mutual influence, it is clear that in these years, Afro-Caribbean poets affiliated with surrealism admired the work of African-American writers. In interview with Charles H. Rowell, Aimé Césaire noted:

> In spite of our imperfect knowledge of English, we had read people like Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, later Sterling Brown and other people of the Black Renaissance collected in Alain Locke's anthology [*The New Negro*]. [...] They [the Black Americans] were the first to teach us the rudiments of what we called "Négritude". They were the first to say "Black is beautiful". This does not seem to be much, but it was tremendous. It was the beginning of a cultural revolution, a kind of revolution of values. It was in no way a refusal of the outside world, it was bringing things into focus. (Rowell 789-797)

20 An extensive network of ideologies within and related to the Black diaspora was clearly an essential aspect of the development of modernism in New York, although this generally has been overlooked in discussions of surrealism in exile. For example, Tashjian has suggested that, "For avant-garde artists in New York, modernism in its various guises claimed priority, not ethnicity" (Tashjian 264). This was clearly not the case with wartime surrealism's aspirations in New York, given the inspiration for the title of *VVV*, and Breton's close alignment with the work of Césaire and Lam.

21 In some specific instances, the lack of connection between the surrealists and African-American artists may have stemmed from other ideological differences. For example, it is possible that Breton was slighted by Langston Hughes's 1933 translation of Louis Aragon's poem "Magnitogorsk," which was published in *Littérature internationale* after Hughes met Aragon in Moscow. Anita Patterson has noted, "Aragon's connections with Surrealism were politically fraught by the time he wrote "Magnitogorsk." It is telling and apt that Hughes selects for translation a poem published after Aragon's break with the Surrealist movement" (Patterson 408). Breton was, of course, infamous in his close distinctions between those he viewed as standing with surrealism and those against it.[4]

Breton, Political Freedom, and the Depths of the Unconscious

22 Beyond possible political differences, Breton surely was concerned about his tenuous status in the United States, and it would be tempting to speculate that the surrealist lack of strong ties with African-American artists and activists was due to caution. The FBI closely scrutinized the work of Black writers, leading some to go so far as creating code names.[5] The U.S. government also viewed the leaders of the Double-V campaign and other Black journalists as a serious threat. The military allegedly burned African-American newspapers to keep them away from Black soldiers, while J. Edgar Hoover

attempted to indict the publishers responsible for the Double-V campaign on charges of treason.[6]

23 It has been suggested, but not firmly established, that Breton was also under FBI surveillance during his years in New York. Through the Freedom of Information Act, it has been discovered that the FBI documents on Breton were at some point destroyed (Sullivan 456). In contrast, as reporter John Cook has explored, the FBI's seventy-page file on Breton's colleague Claude Lévi-Strauss demonstrates that the organization carefully investigated the anthropologist. Cook notes that the most "damning information" in the file is:

> a report from the Secretary of Labor that Lévi-Strauss and [...] Breton were "closely connected with a group in Mexico which is very bad, having something on their minds different from 'what the rest of us have on our minds.'" (Cook, "FBI")

24 It is important and intriguing that the author of this report, Francis Perkins, Secretary of Labor from 1933 to 1945, was also the former mother-in-law of *VVV* editor David Hare.

25 However, while it is clear that members of Breton's circle were being monitored in the U.S., Breton's prior behaviour under surveillance in Martinique just before to his arrival in New York does not demonstrate a reluctance on his part to engage with other political dissidents. As Breton carefully recounts in his 1948 collection of essays *Martinique: Snake Charmer*, during his time on the island, he was followed by two men who readily admitted to being members of the secret police working for the Vichy government. And yet it was in Martinique that Breton became acquainted with Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, themselves under threat by the Vichy governor for the content of their journal *Tropiques.* In 1943, the governor would enact a ban on the journal, calling the group, "Racists, sectarians, revolutionaries, ingrates, and traitors to the fatherland, poisoners of minds" (Maximen xxix). In response, the *Tropiques* editors submitted a vicious letter denouncing the Vichy government and claiming allegiance with international efforts for Black freedom: "'Racists,' yes. Racism like that of Toussaint Louverture, Claude McKay and Langston Hughes—against the racism like that of Drumont and Hitler" (Maximen xxix).

26 On a more pragmatic note, Breton's refusal to learn English while in New York would have also inhibited his ability to connect with any African-American writers who did not have a command of French, much as his refusal to attempt to speak Haitian Creole hindered his ability to engage in a deeper discussion with the painter Hector Hyppolite while visiting Haiti[7]. Within the pages of *VVV,* Breton instead engaged with artists who could, as Dawn Ades has put it, "speak from within and without" (Ades 46). Lam and Césaire had both lived in Paris, had both closely bonded with Breton during his journey into exile, and both brought a decidedly surrealist influence to their depictions of African diaspora histories, cultures and religious practices. Their work well-represented the aims outlined on the first page of *VVV*, where "V" could also signify a move beyond the "external world, the conscious surface," to "the View inside us, the eye turned toward the interior world and the depths of the unconscious".

27 A spread of pages in the fourth issue of *VVV* reveal much about the artistic activities that Breton viewed as best representing surrealism as it evolved in the Americas and sought to address regional issues of race and racism. The sequence begins with a full-page photograph of Césaire, smiling broadly while standing in what appears to be Fort Saint-Louis in Fort-de-France, Martinique. Césaire's poem, "Batouque" is published

over the next five pages. The title of the poem refers to Afro-Brazilian religious practices that involve dancing, percussion and trance states; "Batouque" is another, possibly older, name for "Candomblé". It is interesting to note that the editors of *VVV* did not assume their readership would be familiar with these concepts, so a note explains that "Batouque" signifies the "rhythm of the Brazilian tam-tam".

28 Césaire's "Batouque" is full of references to the transatlantic slave trade and slavery in the Americas:

> cravatted by the jetsam of my nameless slave galley ... a sargasso of melted screams
>
> batouque of the river swollen with crocodile tears and drifting whips. (Césaire 151)

29 The poem is illustrated by an image of a sculpture by the Brazilian artist Maria Martins, entitled "Macumba". The sculpture depicts a scene of the Afro-Brazilian ritual referenced in its title (the term "Macumba" is at times used interchangeably with "Candomblé"). Two female figures stand on either side of a male who induces the initiates into a trance state through dancing and drumming so that they can communicate with the spirits.[8]

30 The sequence in *VVV* concludes with a photograph of the Cuban artist Wifredo Lam painting in his studio against the backdrop of his large canvas from 1943, *The Jungle.* The painting has been described as depicting Cuban Santería *orishas* (deities) moving amongst sugarcane, thus drawing links between the crop most associated with slavery and "the secret survival of African beliefs in the context of the New World" (Lucie-Smith 65).

31 Gerardo Mosquera has asserted that the African presence in modern art of Latin America at times reflects "a reality where magic and myth play a very active role within contemporary problems" (Mosquera 34). The sequence in *VVV* attempts just such a connection. It strongly establishes the dual mission of the "Vs" within *VVV*'s title, exploring the struggle for victory over a world that "tends to perpetuate the enslavement of man by man," and the importance of non-European religious practices to the development of "the eye turned toward the interior world". It is important to note, however, that neither Lam nor Césaire were known to have been initiates into Afro-Caribbean religious practices and their use of the rich imagery of these practices was simply one aspect of their eclectic, surrealist-inspired artistic practices. As Judith Bettleheim has noted, "Lam used Santería-inspired imagery, but he was never Santería-centric and continually combined signifiers from many traditions, some African-based, some not" (Bettleheim 14).

32 Breton and surrealists in the Americas were specifically interested in the connections between historic slave uprisings and religions including Candomblé, Vodou, and Santería, as well as contemporary repression of associated rituals by governments in connection with the Catholic Church. Alluding to this history within the pages of *VVV* allowed the exiled surrealists to assert their racial politics without entering into a direct confrontation with the U.S. authorities. In the journal, Césaire's poem and its themes around the slave trade are juxtaposed with an image of the author, soon to be Communist mayor of Fort-de-France, standing in the very fort that historically served as the central point of defence for the French colony. And as Lam's interview with Max-Pol Fouchet reveals, he envisioned his art as a "Trojan horse" that could infiltrate the centers of power and "spew forth hallucinating figures with the power to surprise, to disturb the dreams of the exploiters" (Fouchet 188-189). Manthia Diawara has reflected

on the similar strategies of covert rebellion within Césaire's journal *Tropiques,* as promoted by co-editor René Ménil, who was, "aware of Surrealism's usefulness in introducing Marxist and revolutionary praxis in the everyday lives of colonized people under the watchful eyes of the authorities in Martinique" (Diawara n.p.).

33 The spread of writing and images in *VVV* issue 4 – from Césaire's poem and Martins' sculpture to Lam's painting – invoke a rebellion drawn from the "great impulses and new paths" that Breton advocated. The spread also evokes an imaginative, at times sexualized violence that is reflected by Matta's *vagina dentata* on the cover of the issue, and informs each artists' larger body of work. Césaire had gained the admiration of Breton partially through his *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (1939), which reclaimed colonial stereotypes of the "primitive" Black subject through the trope of cannibalism, exclaiming, "Because we hate you and your reason/ we claim kinship/ with dementia praecox with the flaming madness/ of persistent cannibalism" (Césaire 49). Breton especially admired Martins's sculptures of female water and snake deities that she poetically described as mating with and then consuming their male counterparts. Like Matta's *vagina dentata,* Lam's painting *The Jungle* alludes to castration anxiety and dismemberment, with a hand emerging from the thick foliage, bearing a pair of scissors. Some of the other juxtapositions within issue 4 of *VVV* underscore tensions between these subversively violent explorations and the ethnographic interests of the European surrealists. For example, the U.S. writer Robert Allerton Parker contributed an article entitled "Cannibal Designs," offering imaginative interpretations of New Hebrides line drawings based upon a study by A.B. Deacon.

34 In another sequence of pages within issue four of *VVV*, the journal's editorial team made their own offer of a Trojan horse through the iconic image of George Washington. What on first glance appears to be a simple cut-out image of Washington's profile in red, white, and blue — a show of gratitude or even patriotism by the surrealists to their host country — quickly reveals itself to be comprised of an image of a rag covered in red stains. The layout is spread over four pages and includes raised gold stars, clearly a complicated and expensive design decision. The image is based upon Duchamp's provocative assemblage created for (and rejected by) *Vogue* magazine in 1943, entitled *Allégorie de genre*. Duchamp's piece, constructed with surgical gauze and iodine, resembles Washington's profile when viewed from one perspective, and a map of the United States when turned the other way. Thirteen gold stars and the red stripes created by the iodine were meant to evoke an American flag, but are actually "redolent of bloodstained bandages or a used sanitary towel" (Taylor, "Flag"]. As Michael Taylor has suggested of the image in *VVV*:

> [Duchamp] perhaps wanted to remind the magazine's readers that the first President of the United States was a slave-owning war-monger, with not just blood on his hands, but saturated over his entire profile. (Taylor, "Flag")

35 As if to reinforce their message, directly opposite from the cut-out of Washington, the editors of *VVV* chose to place a reproduction of a painting by Matta, with a caption listing its title as *Prince of Blood*. This title draws from the French term *Prince de sang*, the highest rank at court that was given to blood relatives of the king (outside of his immediate family), a distinguisher of the perceived ancestral purity required for power and privilege. Of course, strict laws related to blood purity and the prevention of "racial pollution" had become an important aspect of the Third Reich's efforts to ensure the dominance of the Aryan race. Through this juxtaposition in *VVV,* Washington is indicted as the "Prince of blood," a revolutionary leader, whose legacy

involves the complicated contamination of a violent racist past, furthermore a President whose actions included sending military aid to Haiti to aid white slaveholders during the Haitian revolution. The notion of Washington as the hero-liberator is strongly questioned here. Perhaps, the surrealists suggest, the common comparisons of Washington and the other liberator in the Americas, Toussaint Louverture, cannot stand.

36 Clearly, one of the strong ironies of surrealism in exile in the United States during World War II was that exposure to new currents of protest had to be embraced with caution and subterfuge. *VVV* represented an attempt, at times veiled, at struggle against racism and the continued manifestations of a grim world history. As Breton would reflect in 1943 in his essay on Césaire: "If the slave traders themselves have vanished from the world's stage, one may be certain that in return they rage on in the mind, where their 'black ivory' is our dreams" (Breton 2008, 196).

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NOTES

1. For example, see Ilene Fort, Tere Arcq, and Terri Geis (eds.). *In Wonderland: The Surrealist Adventures of Women Artists in Mexico and the United States*. Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Prestel Verlag, 2012 and Dawn Ades, Rita Eder, and Graciela Speranza (eds.). *Debates on Surrealism in Latin America: Vivísimo Muerto*. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2012.
2. For an excellent analysis of surrealism's engagement in the 1930s with issues of racism and colonialism, see Amanda Stansell (Spiteri and Lacoss 111-126).
3. "Murderous Humanitarianism" was written in 1932, and translated into English by Samuel Beckett for inclusion in Cunard's *Negro: An Anthology* (1934). The original French document is lost.
4. Affiliates of Breton in the United States recall his strong reaction to the mere mention of Aragon's name (Polizzotti 500). Even Breton's close allegiance with Césaire had conditions, as can be seen from Breton's comments in his "Prolegomena to a Third Manifesto of Surrealism Or Else," published in the first issue of *VVV,* "Aimé Césaire, magnetic and black, who having broken all old tags, Eluardian and others, writes the poems we need today, in Martinique."
5. See, for example, Holcomb (2009).
6. These events have been examined in Stanley Nelson's 1999 documentary film, "The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords." See the website: http://www.pbs.org/blackpress/index.html
7. In his 1948 essay on Hyppolite (later included in *Surrealism and Painting,* 1965), Breton stated that Hyppolite's "extreme reserve, coupled with the great difficulty he had in expressing himself in French, unfortunately made a coherent conversation almost impossible".
8. For a close investigation of Maria Martins's involvement with surrealism and her inclusion in *VVV,* see Terri Geis, "'My Goddesses and My Monsters': Maria Martins and Surrealism in the 1940s" (Ades et al. 145-159).

ABSTRACTS

The 1940s exile in the United States of many European surrealists, including André Breton, is viewed as a moment in which the movement widened to encompass a broader range of artistic voices and visions. This expansion of the surrealist group is reflected in the short-lived but significant journal *VVV,* which included many contributions from artists of the Americas, and

specifically from the Caribbean. It has been suggested that the editors of *VVV* were also in part inspired by the political efforts of African-Americans, yet the actual connections between the exiled surrealists and the artists, writers, and political activists of Harlem remained limited. This essay examines a moment of missed opportunity due to political repression during the Second World War, and also explores the strong creative alliances formed with writers and artists of Martinique and Cuba, as demonstrated in the pages of *VVV*.

L'exil des surréalistes européens, notamment d'André Breton, aux Etats-Unis, au début des années quarante, marque l'ouverture du mouvement à un plus grand nombre d'approches et de pratiques artistiques. Cette expansion du groupe surréaliste est relayée par *VVV*, une revue importante malgré sa courte durée de vie, qui accueille dans ses pages de nombreuses contributions d'artistes américains. Si les éditeurs de *VVV* déclarent vouloir s'engager politiquement aux côtés des Africains-Américains, les liens entre les surréalistes émigrés et les écrivains, artistes et militants politique d'Harlem restent de fait limités. En le resituant dans le contexte de la répression politique qui fait suite à la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, cet article examine les raisons d'un rendez-vous manqué.

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Mots-clés: surréalisme, VVV, droits civiques, diaspora africaine, exil
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